

Bellcore

Bell Communications Research

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November 24, 1998

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Room 222
Washington, DC 20554**RECEIVED****NOV 24 1998**FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**Re: CC Docket 98-147**
ExParte

Dear Ms. Salas:

On November 23, 1998, the undersigned and Messrs. Jeffrey Goldthorp and Michael Slomin of Bellcore met with Mr. Stagg Newman of the Commission's Office of Engineering and Technology, and Messrs. Douglas Sicker and Jonathan Askin of the Commission's Common Carrier Bureau, to answer staff questions about the status of ongoing telecommunications standards activities that relate to the Commission's ongoing CC Docket 98-147, Section 706 rulemaking proceeding.

Bellcore described the status of standardization efforts in Committee T1E1 relating to power spectral density limitations for XDSL. Mr. Goldthorp noted that a Bellcore contribution made last year could be applied to such services, but he anticipated that it will be superseded by a new Bellcore contribution and by other contributions that are expected to be made at a scheduled November 30 meeting of the standard body. In his view, these new contributions will better accommodate new technology.

The staff asked whether existing contributions might be employed as interim standards. Mr. Goldthorp noted that if the previous Bellcore contribution were used in the interim, it would adequately protect telecommunications networks and facilities from harm, but its requirements would probably be excessively conservative. By waiting several weeks until after the standards body has met, the Commission may have specifications available to it that are less conservative, and that might be used in the interim.

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The staff asked how it can be ensured that standards in this area will work with future technologies. Mr. Goldthorp urged the Commission to rely on industry standards that can evolve rapidly to meet new technologies and needs, and not freeze standards in rules. In response to a staff concern that standards might evolve too slowly, it was observed that the Commission can “jawbone” standards bodies and their participants to ensure that this does not occur.

The staff asked whether it would be appropriate to allow individual ILECs and CLECs to exceed a standardized power spectral density mask by agreement. Mr. Goldthorp urged that this not be permitted because it could adversely affect competition in two ways. First, an agreement by existing ILECs and CLECs would have the effect of minimizing or eliminating opportunities for other service providers to enter and compete in that market in the future. And second, to the extent that an ILEC’s willingness to accept non-conforming signals is due to the characteristics of specific less vulnerable central office equipment that it is using, this could have the effect of making it more difficult or impossible for that ILEC to migrate to other equipment or suppliers, thereby adversely affecting competition among the ILEC’s suppliers.

The staff asked how disputes about particular loops and binder groups might be resolved when spectrum incompatibility is the suspected cause of trouble. The Bellcore participants noted that resolution of such disputes may turn on complex technical issues, and it will prove important for there to be some form of disinterested testing/auditing to determine the facts. This could be performed by expert regulatory staff at the state or federal level, by an expert retained by a regulatory body or court (similar to a “special master”), by expert fact-finders in any alternative dispute resolution agreed to by the parties (e.g., arbitrator, mediator, fact-finder), or by experts retained by the parties to a dispute.

Finally, the staff asked whether there are technical reasons to stop a CLEC from deploying broadband services above an ILEC’s voiceband on the same loop, with the ILEC providing a splitter to facilitate this. Mr. Goldthorp noted that the standards bodies have not considered this. While the power spectral density standards governing a loop may be the same in this scenario as they are in the currently-considered scenario in which the same entity is providing both the broadband and voice services, there are operational issues that would need to be addressed for this to be an effective service option. First, various operations support systems would probably need to be modified to track this multiple-supplier scenario. And second, various maintenance and fault isolation procedures may need to be created or modified to avoid finger-pointing in the event of service difficulties. The circumstances may differ from today’s multi-supplier environment in which IXC, LECs and ISPs all use the same local loop and switching facilities; here they will be utilizing different portions of such facilities.

In accordance with Section 1.1206 of the Commission's rules, an original and three copies of this letter is being filed with your office. If there are any questions relating to this filing please call the undersigned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Knapp", written in a cursive style.

Michael J. Knapp
Director-Federal Relations

cc: Mr. S. Newman
Mr. D. Sicker
Mr. J. Askin